

Statement Addendum

Client Name: Gordon Mcarthur
Date of Birth: 02/07/1956
Care Setting: Kerelaw school in stevenson scotland
Dates: 1970
Persons Involved: The staff and Children

Full Statement

I was around fourteen years old in 1970 when my life changed in a way I could never have imagined. I was taken away from my parents by the courts. At the time I didn't understand why it was happening. No one explained anything to me. I remember feeling confused, frightened and completely powerless as I was removed from my family. I had done nothing that I understood to deserve being taken away from the people and home I knew.

I was then placed in Kierlaw School in Stevenston, Ayrshire. From the moment I arrived there, it became the worst place I have ever experienced in my life. Instead of being welcomed or cared for, I was met with harsh voices from the staff shouting at me. They were aggressive and intimidating from the very beginning. I remember being pushed and spoken to like I was nothing. I was only a child, scared and alone, yet there was no kindness, no reassurance, and no explanation for why I had been brought there.

Very quickly the environment started to affect me mentally. I felt constantly frustrated, confused and distressed. I had no support and no one to turn to for comfort or understanding. Instead of being helped, I was often isolated. I was regularly locked away in a room on my own for long periods of time. Sometimes it felt like most of my time there was spent in isolation. Being shut away like that as a young boy was terrifying and deeply upsetting. It made me feel forgotten and worthless.

Physical punishment was common and happened regularly. Staff would beat us with a belt as punishment. I remember being hit across my backside and hands repeatedly until the pain was unbearable and I was crying. The skin would sting and feel red raw afterwards. These beatings were not rare events — they were used often and seemed to be a normal way for the staff to control us. Sometimes they would also push us around or restrain us in ways that were painful and frightening.

The atmosphere in the place was one of constant fear. The staff behaved as if they owned us and controlled every part of our lives. They bullied us and intimidated us daily. Many times when they walked past they would push or prod us for no reason, just to remind us that they had power over us.

The showers were another deeply humiliating experience. They were always supervised by staff, which made it extremely embarrassing for us as children. I remember feeling ashamed and uncomfortable being watched like that. On some occasions staff would try to wash me themselves, saying they had to do it. I refused because it made me feel so uncomfortable and humiliated. When I refused, I was punished for it. Food was also used as punishment. There were times when I was sent to bed hungry because they

withheld meals from me. Instead of being properly cared for, food was treated like something they could take away whenever they wanted to punish us. Going to bed hungry as a child, already frightened and alone, made everything feel even worse.

I also struggled with bedwetting at that age, something many children deal with. Instead of helping me or showing understanding, the staff used it as another way to humiliate me. They embarrassed me whenever they had the chance, making me feel ashamed for something I couldn't control.

The way the staff spoke to us was cruel and degrading. They shouted constantly and sometimes hit us across the face. Another form of punishment was forcing us to stand alone in cold, dark hallways for hours at a time. I remember standing there in the darkness, scared and wondering why this was happening to me. While I was in Kierlaw School, I was never allowed any visits from my family. Not once. Being cut off from my parents meant I had no way to tell anyone what was happening to me or ask for help. It made me feel completely abandoned and trapped.

Although we were allowed to make friends with other children, the staff would often try to turn us against each other. They created conflict between the children and sometimes even forced us to fight each other. I also witnessed other children being beaten by staff members, which made the environment even more frightening. Seeing other boys being hurt made me realise that none of us were safe.

There were two elderly men and a younger man among the staff who were particularly cruel. I cannot remember their names now, but I will never forget their faces or the way they treated us. They were responsible for much of the abuse I experienced there.

The time I spent in that place had a deep and lasting effect on my life. Even many years later, the memories remain very painful. Talking about it is extremely difficult for me because it brings everything back. It has affected my mental health in many ways. I suffer from anxiety and have struggled with symptoms that feel like post-traumatic stress. I find it very difficult to trust people, and this has affected my relationships throughout my life.

The trauma I experienced also affected my relationship with my daughter's mother. The damage from those early years made it hard for me to understand how to deal with emotions or trust others. In the end it contributed to the breakdown of that relationship, something that has been very painful for me to accept. For many years I tried to cope with the memories and the anxiety by turning to alcohol. It became a way to try and block out the pain and the memories of what happened to me. At my lowest point, I even attempted to take my own life because the weight of everything felt too much to carry.

Thankfully, I have since managed to turn things around in that respect. I have now been clean from alcohol for seven years. That is something I am proud of, but the damage caused by what happened to me as a child in care has never fully gone away. The memories, the anxiety and the loss of trust in people are things I still live with today.

Looking back, I believe I was badly failed as a child. Instead of being protected and supported, I was placed in an environment where I was physically and mentally abused, humiliated and neglected. I was only a young boy who needed care and understanding, but instead I was treated with cruelty and punishment. Those experiences have shaped my life in ways that are still affecting me decades later.